

Orthodontic retainers: frequently asked questions

What are retainers?

Retainers are removable appliances which retain your teeth in their new position after the removal of fixed appliances. They are the most important part of the treatment process.

There are two types of retainers, removable and fixed.

Removable retainers are thin, gum-shield type appliances that are transparent. Fixed retainers are thin wires which are bonded onto the tongue side of the front teeth; these are therefore not visible. Fixed retainers are not always required and will only be used if your orthodontist feels that it is necessary. A removable retainer is always used in conjunction with fixed retainers.

Why should I wear retainers?

Your teeth may move back towards their original position if you do not wear your retainers.

When and how often should I wear my retainers?

Removable retainers should be worn in the long term with the following regime:

1. First year – wear every night.
2. Second year – wear alternate nights.
3. Third and subsequent years – wear two nights per week, long term.

Fixed retainers should last for many years; however, they can become detached from the teeth. Should this occur, the fixed retainer may require removal or repair, by a dental professional.

Who will look after my retainers?

You will look after your retainers!

You need to clean your retainers when you take them out. You can clean them with some liquid hand soap and a separate toothbrush. **Do not use toothpaste** as this is too abrasive and can damage your retainers.

After removal of your braces and fitting retainers, the orthodontic team will monitor the retention of your teeth for 12 months. After this time, you will be discharged back to your dentist with the instructions to wear retainers as described above in the long term. Your dentist will then be responsible for any subsequent maintenance and replacement of your retainers; there may be a charge for this.

What shall I do if my retainer breaks?

Contact the Dental Service as soon as reasonable on 0333 405 0290. If the retainers are lost or broken, our standard fee for replacement will be charged. This is approximately £40 per retainer.